United Nations S/PV.7627

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7627th meeting

Thursday, 18 February 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ramírez Carreño	(Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of))
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Faye
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-04262 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Mladenov, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Jerusalem.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: I regret to inform the Security Council that the violence that has been erupting in Israel and Palestine since October of last year shows no sign of relenting. Some recent incidents may point to a troubling new phase in the conflict. On 31 January, a Palestinian security officer traveling in an official vehicle opened fire at a checkpoint near Ramallah and injured three Israeli soldiers. This was one of three incidents to date involving a member of the Palestinian security forces. Although he was acting independently, such incidents can be potentially harmful to the relationship between both security forces. On 3 February, a complex attack took place at Damascus Gate that resulted in the death of an Israeli border policewoman. In a worrying advancement in weaponry and tactics, the three assailants, all of whom were killed, carried semi-automatic weapons, pipe bombs and knives. Just a couple of hours before this meeting, in a supermarket in the West Bank, two Israelis were stabbed, one of whom later succumbed to his wounds. The two 14-year -old Palestinian attackers were shot by an armed civilian. Our thoughts go out to the families of these latest victims.

As tensions persist, Israelis continue to grapple with the fear of terrorism just as Palestinians continue to be killed and injured in clashes across the West Bank. Once again, the United Nations strongly condemns all acts of terror and violence. This spiral of violence, which has to date taken at least 137 Palestinian and 19 Israeli lives, cannot be reversed by security means alone. It must be addressed at the political level, with leaders showing a political horizon to their people and standing up to incitement and the radicals among their own constituents.

Only genuine progress towards a just peace that allows the people of Israel and the people of Palestine to live side by side in safe and secure borders will end the bloodshed and counter the rise of extremism. Against the backdrop of radicalisation, terror, sectarian violence, war and tectonic geopolitical shifts in the Middle East, peace and security for Palestine and Israel is imperative now more than ever.

Over the past year, the United States, Russia, the European Union and the Secretary-General, as part of the Middle East Quartet, have engaged actively in seeking a way forward out of the deadlock. Quartet envoys have travelled to the region to meet with Palestinian and Israeli leaders. We have consulted with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and, most recently, Norway. Since September of last year, the Quartet principals have met three times.

We have sought how not only to preserve the two-State solution, but to create the conditions that would allow the parties to return to meaningful negotiations on resolving the final status issues and ending the occupation that began in 1967. This includes steps on the ground consistent with prior agreements that both parties can take to strengthen Palestinian institutions, security and economic prospects, while upholding security for Israelis. We have voiced our common concern that the current trends on the ground — including continued acts of violence against civilians, ongoing settlement activity, and the high rate of demolitions of Palestinian structures — are dangerously imperiling the viability of a two-State solution.

The commitment of the Middle East Quartet to remaining engaged with the parties and to working with key international stakeholders, the region and the Security Council is unequivocal. This is why, at their latest meeting in Munich, the principals agreed that the Quartet should prepare a report on the status quo, including recommendations on the way forward. The report should focus on the dangers of continuing on the current trajectory, identify the impediments to the two-State solution on all sides, and point the way towards restoring a political horizon. Ultimately, the report

should also help build international consensus on the way ahead.

Collective international efforts to help establish a political horizon will all be for naught absent genuine Israeli and Palestinian motivation to address the chronic realities endangering the two-State solution. From the outset, significant policy shifts by Israel, including increasing Palestinian investment and economic activity in Area C, are required to strengthen Palestinian institutions, economy and security prospects.

Israel's settlement enterprise continues to be an impediment to peace. While 2015 may have seen a slower overall pace of settlement planning and construction, the reality is that Israel continues to push forward with consolidation of its control of the West Bank. Several moves since the beginning of the year — such as the classification of new "State land" in the Jordan Valley and the approval of several plans in settlements — also appear to point towards an increase in settlement activities.

During the past few weeks alone, Israeli authorities in Area C and East Jerusalem have demolished 201 Palestinian-owned structures, including 79 that were donor-funded. As a result, 320 people were displaced. Since the beginning of 2016, Israel has demolished on average 29 Palestinian-owned structures per week, which is three times the weekly average for 2015. These actions run directly counter to the idea of peace.

Separately, we also remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating condition of Mohammed Al-Qiq, the Palestinian journalist who has been on hunger strike for over 85 days to protest against his administrative detention. I take this opportunity to once again join the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights in calling for all persons subject to administrative detention to be either charged or released immediately.

The challenge of getting back to an environment conducive to peace also falls heavily on the shoulders of the Palestinians. Advancing genuine reconciliation on the basis of non-violence, democracy and the Palestine Liberation Organization principles is a key priority. I welcome the recent unity talks in Qatar and urge all sides to continue their discussions and implement previous agreements, particularly those brokered by Egypt. The formation of a national unity Government and long-overdue elections are vital to laying the foundations of a future Palestinian State.

The issue of incitement runs to the heart of the current climate of tension and fear. It is essential that authorities on both sides do more to address this scourge. I am particularly concerned that some Palestinian factions continue to glorify violence and terror. Such acts only contribute to tensions and violence. Governance reforms must also remain a central commitment of the Palestinian Authority.

Volatility persists in Gaza amid a tenuous security situation. The collapse of another four tunnels — bringing the total to date this year to five — and the continued test-firing and launching of rockets at Israel indicate that Hamas continues to directly threaten the security of Israel. Such actions risk not only people's lives but also the fragile reconstruction process in the devastated Strip. The population of Gaza is squeezed from all sides. With little prospect of seeing public sector salaries paid, increased informal taxation and a strangled economy, tensions are rising. I have just returned from Gaza, where I visited the Al-Shujaiya neighborhood that had been devastated during the conflict in 2014. It was encouraging to see the visible positive changes and new construction as life is reborn out of the rubble, but I am all too well aware that work is yet to start on the homes of some 74 per cent of families displaced in 2014.

Rebuilding these houses, however, will not be enough. We must secure peace and focus on building Gaza for the future. This means providing clean water and sufficient energy, creating jobs and a sustainable economy, restoring free movement for people and goods and, above all, ensuring integration between the West Bank and Gaza under a single democratic and legitimate Palestinian Authority.

Turning to Lebanon, in a positive sign the Cabinet of Prime Minister Salam resumed sessions on 28 January and 2 February and approved several decrees. However, I remain deeply concerned that the presidential vacancy impairs Lebanon's ability to address the many challenges facing the country. On behalf of the Secretary-General, I call on members of the Lebanese Parliament to convene urgently and elect a President.

The recent Syria donors conference in London yielded important commitments of international support to reinforce Lebanon's stability in the face of the refugee crisis. The United Nations will continue to work closely with Lebanon to monitor and implement

commitments on the basis of the Government's statement of intent.

With respect to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, at the first tripartite meeting since the 20 December and 4 January incidents, Israel and Lebanon concurred on the need to maintain calm and stability and to ensure security along the Blue Line. Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace, however, have continued on an almost daily basis.

Turning briefly to the Golan, the situation in the vicinity of the ceasefire line continues to be of concern as fighting between the Syrian armed forces and armed groups, and between different armed groups themselves, continues. These developments have the potential to escalate the situation in an already tense regional environment.

In closing, let me return to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and appeal to the leaders of both peoples and all international stakeholders. There are clear avenues out of the current political morass, but they require unity of effort and bold, creative and courageous work on the part of many. Despite the work that has been done, the cold reality for the Israeli and Palestinian people is that all have failed them. The conflict has now arrived at a pivotal point. Israelis and Palestinians must now actively shape their future, with the dedicated support of the international community, before the opponents of peace decide their fate for them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.15 p.m.